

The Lost Mistress
by: Robert Browning

All's over, then: does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes?
Hark, 'tis the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves!

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that, to-day;
One day more bursts them open fully
---You know the red turns grey.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest?
May I take your hand in mine?
Mere friends are we,---well, friends the merest
Keep much that I resign:

For each glance of the eye so bright and black,
Though I keep with heart's endeavour,---
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,
Though it stay in my soul for ever!---

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
Or only a thought stronger;
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
Or so very little longer!

The Lost Mistress, by the romantic poet Robert Browning, is written in the late Victorian period. It was published in 1845. It is a monologue which is a dramatic soliloquy or a poem presented by one person. Here, the man is speaking to himself or to an implied audience or to the silent mistress who is silent but still present.

(Stanza 1)

The man has lost his mistress and everything is over now. Of course, truth seems hard according to his belief. To entertain himself, he went to the cottage of his mistress and listened to the singing of the sparrows at that good night.

(Stanza 2)

The buds of the grape tree were still close, and today he noticed that some are fully open.

(Stanza 3) He wishes that he will meet her tomorrow at the same time. In this case, he will take her hand in his hand and they will be just like friends from the premise that "anything is better than nothing".

(Stanza 4) He remembers by heart every time that he looked in her eyes. Not only, he remembers her voice when she wished for the snow flowers but also keeps them in his soul.

(Stanza 5)

When he meets her, he will not say or think of anything more than that would be done by friends. He will hold her hands for not so long time.

Figures of speech:

alliteration (or internal music) can be found in (as/at; and/are; the/then; may/mine; we/well; bright/black; when/wish; stay/soul; hold/hand; little; longer).

Repetition also can be notice in line 5 (the/the), Line 11 (mere/mere), Line 19 (as/as).

Rhetorical Questions are found in the first stanza:

"All's over, then: does truth sound bitter;

As one at first believes?"

And in the third stanza:

Tomorrow we meet the same then, dearest?

May I take your hand in mine?

Apostrophe appears in "Hark, ".

Metaphors are also included in the poem as in " truth sounds bitter/ glance of the eye so bright and black".

Contrast appears in (wooly/open), (red/grey), (bright/black).

The main theme in the poem is a theme of love. The poem opens in the middle of a conversation between two lovers. The Lost Mistress opens with the wonderfully simple "All's over, then". The man is equating the love of his mistress as being all affairs in his life.

The tone of the poem is that of despair over the lost mistress and the lost love. This is clear in the use of words such as (all's over, bitter, woolly, gray, black).

As for the Metre, the poem is five four-line stanzas. The rhyme pattern is ABABCD CD.